strike. The front door was always bashed in or missing, like an old man's bloody dentures after somebody kicked him in the mouth.

Moving vans full of fertilizer pulled up and stalled at the illuminated fountain in the circular driveway. Somebody poured cream soda into the water. It foamed and frothed like the memorial of the war between Iran and Iraq.

Patricia Stinker, the lady Scrooge, was doing her accounts, checking up on her investments, the sinking fund. She heard a commotion, banging and scraping in the street twenty stories below. She peered out through the lace curtains of a lace-curtain Irish woman. Half naked in just her brassiere, smooth shoulders gleaming in the winter twilight, it was Mildred dragging an iron bed-frame down the street. She'd just plundered it from the Best Lodge dumpster. She was drunk. She shouted at the by-standers that they were bums.

*

The manager sulked, and wouldn't invite me to any more cigarette breaks with herself and Adam. A few days later Adam had to leave early for one of his periodic fund-raising meetings. He hated them. They usually concerned arrangements for a charity concert. The music was always classical. The venue was always a particular Anglican church on Spoor Street. He called Scriabin Scabies, believers were